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SPEECH COMMUNICATION AND THE AMERICAN INDIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT.

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A 5-DAY CONFERENCE, COSPONSORED BY KANSAS UNIVERSITY'S COMMUNICATION RESEARCH CENTER AND SOUTH DAKOTA UNIVERSITY'S INSTITUTE FOR INDIAN STUDIES, WAS HELD IN MAY 1967 TO DISCUSS THE TEACHING OF SPEECH COMMUNICATION TO AMERICAN INDIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS. THIS REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE CONTAINS THREE POSITION STATEMENTS, DRAFTED BY THE CONFEREES, DEALING WITH--(1) A RECOMMENDED PROGRAM OF SPEAKING AND LISTENING TRAINING FOR INDIAN STUDENTS, (2) A RECOMMENDED PROGRAM OF TEACHER PREPARATION, INCLUDING A SUGGESTED 4-YEAR COURSE OF STUDY WITH A MINIMUM OF 126 SEMESTER HOURS, AND (3) SELECTED MAJOR PROBLEMS RELEVANT TO THE SPEECH COMMUNICATION NEEDS OF AMERICAN INDIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND RECOMMENDED FOR IMMEDIATE AND INTENSIVE RESEARCH INVESTIGATION. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN "THE SPEECH TEACHER," VOL. 17 (JANUARY 1968), 38-43. (MM)

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Lynn R. Osborn

SPEECH COMMUNICATION AND THE AMERICAN INDIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

A FIVE-DAY conference dealing with speech communication and the American Indian high school student convened on the campus of the University of South Dakota in Vermillion, South Dakota, May 29, 1967. The meetings were co-sponsored by the Communication Research Center of The University of Kansas and the Institute for Indian Studies at the University of South Dakota and supported by a grant from the Danforth Foundation. The twenty-one participants included representatives of the United States Office of Education, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Office of Economic Opportunity, and the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL); college and university faculty members; state educational officials; classroom teachers from federal, public, and private Indian schools; and the executive secretaries of the Speech Association of America and the National Society for the Study of Communication.[1]

Lynn R. Osborn (Ed. D., The University of Kansas, 1962) is Assistant Dean of Faculties for Research and Associate Professor of Speech Communication, The University of Kansas. He served as director of the conference discussed in this report. A special note of gratitude is extended to the Associate Director, Professor Sylvester Clifford of the University of South Dakota.

[1] The tone of the conference was set in the opening session by the keynote speaker, Dr. William Work, Executive Secretary of the Speech Association of America, as he challenged the conferees with an appraisal of the educational and social significance of the work that lay ahead of them. Other featured speakers included Miss Ella Deloria, Dakota lexicographer and former associate of Franz Boas; Mr. Thomas Hopkins, Assistant Chief, Branch of Curriculum, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Professor Oscar Howe, Indian artist and scholar; Dr. R. Wayne Pace, Executive Secretary, National Society for the Study of Communication; Professor Gale Richards, Chairman, Department of Speech, Arizona State University; and Mrs. Hildegard Thompson, member, Executive Committee, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

During the first three days of the conference the participants reviewed past and present theories and practice involved in the teaching of speech to American Indian high school students and considered teacher preparation and recent research in this and related fields. Prior to the conference proper, abstracts of formal papers were distributed; and reaction panels appointed in advance of the meetings served as stimuli for depth discussion of the points raised by each speaker.

During the remainder of the week the participants drafted the three statements which follow. The task force groups responsible for the initial preparation of these documents were organized several months before the conference and began their work by correspondence at that time. After each particular statement was finished, it was discussed at length, revised, and finally submitted to the entire group for approval.

A Recommended Program of Speaking and Listening Training

American Indian high school students display varying degrees of fluency in spoken American English. While the Indian may have no difficulty in communicating with other members of his native community, he often is unable to communicate effectively with members of the non-Indian world. Whether bilingual or not, he is likely to display

communication deficiencies when compared with his non-Indian peers. Members of the dominant society perceive these deficiencies to be shyness, lack of fluency, and inability to speak directly and forcefully.

These handicaps are seen as obstacles which the American Indian student must surmount if he is to take his rightful place in the main stream of American society. If we act on the premise that the American Indian student wishes to enter the dominant culture, that his school attendance at the secondary level represents a commitment to participate in the affairs of the larger society, then it is the educator's responsibility to provide those skills, particularly in the area of language and communication, which will help the student to assume a productive role in today's world.

The communication problems which the Indian student displays are symptomatic of a larger problem, that of cultural dislocation. The teacher of Speech Communication to Indians must know whence his students have come, if he is to help them to decide where they are going. He must recognize that structural and functional language habits firmly established in childhood are not easily changed.

A student who comes from a culture which is cooperative rather than competitive, which discourages dissent, and which reinforces reticence, cannot quickly adapt to a competitive, argumentative, and highly verbal world without running the risk of severe personality disorientation. The Indian student in transition is likely to experience profound feelings of guilt as each additional year of education further estranges him from his home and heritage. Compounding these guilt feelings are those of inadequacy and inferiority reinforced by real or imagined discrimination by members of the society which he is entering. Sadly, the Indian student often comes to feel that he must choose to be either "white" or "Indian." The recognition that one need not "sell out" in order to succeed can be built only by affording the student a deeper appreciation of his original culture and a better understanding of his adopted one.

Whereas the task of the typical American high school is that of *enculturation,* helping the younger members of the dominant society to become mature, responsible, and productive members of their culture, the high school in the predominantly Indian community has the additional task of *acculturation:* assisting the youth of a traditional, conservative culture to adapt to, and become a viable part of, the larger society while still retaining the valuable features of the original one. Although high schools of both types teach basically the same subject matter, their methods and procedures must necessarily be different.

As an educator with the special task of *acculturation,* each teacher of Indian students must deal with the special problems his students display, regardless of his subject matter area. The teacher, however, because his concern cuts across all subject matter boundaries, is in an ideal position to aid the Indian student in his problems of adjustment. Since he recognizes that speech reflects personality, that effective communication cannot exist without mutual understanding and self-respect, he can assess more easily the effectiveness of the student's educational development. As a Speech teacher, there are special skills and concepts which he can best teach in a class (or classes) devoted to speaking and listening in a manner such as that generally outlined below.

Introduction to Speech Communication

Concepts. Spoken language and its development.

Communication and the causes of breakdown (speaking and listening).

Differences and similarities between the student's original language and English in structure and function.

Representative uses of spoken language: to inform, describe, persuade, convince, actuate, entertain, etc.

Representative forms of the speaking-listening process: conversation, discussion, symposium, debate, platform performance, etc.

Levels of spoken language: formal, informal, colloquial.

Approaches to spoken language: semantic, phonetic, aesthetic.

Activities. The first concern of the Speech Communication teacher should be to broaden the Indian student's conceptual knowledge of English by affording him a wide variety of enriching experiences: (1) visiting the local bank, market, police station and court, social welfare agency, college or university; (2) meeting guest speakers of Indian descent who can discuss their personal adjustment to the non-Indian society; (3) viewing provocative feature length films which contain pertinent social concepts (*The Miracle Worker* could be used as an introduction to the nature of language while *Raisin in the Sun* could serve to introduce minority group problems and the development of self-image.).

If carefully planned, these direct experiences can provide the student with valuable insights into the larger society in addition to providing source materials for classroom discussion and ultimately argument.

Classroom speech activities should begin with the simple and work toward the complex. Group discussion, the least threatening form, should precede those activities which require more individual poise and fluency (debate and platform address).

Because the Indian student comes from a culture in which argument and controversy are not socially acceptable behavior, he must gradually, but systematically, be shown that many problems in life require choices between conflicting alternatives, that healthy disagreement is not hostility, and that acknowledging a mistake is not failure.

The Indian student then may be ready to defend a point of view. By carefully structuring the symposium form of discussion, the teacher can cause an argument to be joined in a manner not threatening to the participants. They then may be eased into the debate form, if the question is real and contains opposing arguments of equal weight.

The teacher must recognize that his students' ultimate success as communicators will be measured in large part by their ability to communicate with members of the non-Indian culture. In the isolated reservation school opportunities to meet and interact with members of this mainsream culture are not always possible. However opportunities to visit non-Indian communities should be sought. The resource potential of the Indian student as an interpreter of Indian life and thought to interested members of the larger community should not be overlooked.

If the Indian student successfully makes the cultural transition which history seems to tell us is inevitable, certain educational goals must be achieved. Development of sorely-needed communication skills in the Indian student cannot be the sole responsibility of the Speech Communication teacher. Opportunities for oral expression in all subject matter areas must be discovered and fully utilized. The Speech Communication specialist can render valuable assistance to the rest of a teaching staff by identifying these opportunities, and, if necessary, demonstrating their language development potentials.

It is a certainty that if the Indian student is able to develop and grow in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect where his dreams are encouraged, his opinions welcomed, and his mistakes forgiven, he will have at least a running start toward becoming an autonomous and self-respecting individual capable of functioning productively in today's world.

A Recommended Program of Teacher Preparation

Speech Communication training for Indian students even at the high school level must be viewed as a component of English language learning rather than merely a forensic exercise. By the time

an Indian student is ready for public speaking experience, the training requirements for his teacher, insofar as courses in speech and drama are concerned, will parallel those for teachers of native English speakers. Because of the peculiar needs of Indian students, their teachers need additional special courses which foster understanding of the culturally different. A broad educational experience in the field of anthropology, for example, may help free a teacher from the biases of folk wisdom and traditional stereotypes.

The teacher of Indian students needs to understand their cultural background, the psychological and sociological aspects of their culture, their folk tales and myths, and the relation between their language and culture. He should be aware of the limitations of test scores that have been standardized on middle class non-Indian students as well as curricular decisions based on these scores. He should understand the nature of the English language and be able to apply audiolingual techniques in teaching speaking and listening.

To be specific, the teacher of Indian students should have academic preparation in cultural anthropology with an emphasis on Indian culture. A study of Indian history would help the teacher gain an understanding of some of the attitudes his students may bring to school with them. He should have coursework which will introduce him to social psychology and equip him to make educated and meaningful comparisons of social institutions in the Indian and non-Indian cultures. Theory and practicum courses in teaching spoken English as a communicative skill are imperative.

In the case of the teacher already well prepared in the understandings and techniques of learning theory who has been a successful teacher of Speech Communication to non-Indian students, the following types of courses are felt to be of value in helping prepare him to teach Indian students effectively: introduction to the scientific study of language (linguistics); history of the English language; phonetics and phonemics; methodology of language teaching; introductions to anthropology, social psychology, and sociology; anthropology of the American Indian; and the history and philosophies of Indian education. As an adjunct to these, there is agreement with the findings of the subcommittee of the Committee on Curriculum and Certification of the Speech Association of America as expressed in *Principles and Standards for the Certification of Teachers of Speech in Secondary Schools.*

While it is not feasible to list specific course titles in the following four-year curriculum outline, it is felt that these kinds of courses will help provide the knowledge and understanding required of such teachers.

Suggested Four Year Course of Study
(126 Semester Hours Minimum)

Freshman year (34 semester hours). English: Composition and Literature (6 hrs.); Psychology: Introduction (3 hrs.), Educational (3 hrs.); Physical Education (2 hrs.); Speech: Fundamentals (3 hrs.), Oral Interpretation (3 hrs.); Foreign Language (6 hrs.); Mathematics and/or Laboratory Science (8 hrs.)

Sophomore year (32 semester hours). English: Advanced Composition and/or Survey of Literature (6 hrs.); History and/or Geography (6 hrs.); Government and/or Economics (6 hrs.); Physical Education (2 hrs.); Speech: Speech Science (3 hrs.), Voice and Phonetics (3 hrs.); Foreign Language (6 hrs.)

Junior year (30 semester hours). Education: Human Growth and Development (6 hrs.), Principles and Curriculum of Secondary Education (3 hrs.); History of the English Language (6 hrs.); Anthropology: Introduction (3 hrs.), The American Indian (3 hrs.); Introduction to Sociology (3 hrs.); Speech: Discussion (3 hrs.), Therapy (3 hrs.)

Senior year (30 semester hours). Education:

Tests and Measurements (3 hrs.), General Methods and Practice Teaching (6 hrs.), Problems in Indian Education (3 hrs.), Teaching English as a Second Language (3 hrs.); History of the American Indian (3 hrs.)

Selected Major Problems Recommended for Immediate and Intensive Investigation

The following areas relevant to the speech communication needs of American Indian high school students are recommended for immediate and intensive research investigation:

I. Instructional Objectives: development of proficiencies, development of concepts, and development of attitudes

II. Curriculum Development
- A. Study of status of programs in Indian and Indian-related high school classwork
- B. Feasibility of flexible Speech Communication component in the whole curriculum
- C. Course content: proficiencies, concepts, attitudes; priorities and sequences. This would include investigation of applicability of standard curricula
- D. Relationship of Speech Communication to total curriculum and effect on the English curriculum[2]
- E. Relationships to curricular objectives among the various co-curricular Speech Communication activities

III. Teacher Preparation
- A. Survey of preparation of teachers currently instructing Indian students, including investigation of teacher attitudes and feelings about their needs
- B. Comparative studies of preparation of language teachers in high schools with other bilingual problems
- C. Study of state certification standards and administrative practices relating to the American Indian high school
- D. Study of in-service programs for American Indian high school teachers with special relation to language teaching[2]

IV. Teaching Methodology
- A. Applicability of standard teaching methods
- B. Applicability of teaching methods utilized for other students with cultural or lingual differences[2]
- C. Studies to determine applicability of current group theory to American Indian school learning environment
- D. Exploratory studies in special techniques to increase communication interaction in the classroom[2]
- E. Determination of grade levels at which various stages of language development should occur

V. Instructional Resources
- A. Development of textbook and reference materials designed for Indian students, including desirability and feasibility
- B. Studies in utilization of instructional media or devices[2]
- C. Studies of effect of enrichment programs (outside the classroom) on classroom learning
- D. Studies on utilization of Speech specialists[2]

VI. Cultural Factors
- A. Studies of attitudes toward speech communication in various Indian communities
- B. Studies of speech communication behavior of Indian students
- C. Isolation and identification of factors in the cultural environment that predispose students negatively or positively to oral communication
- D. Study of the value of imparting knowledge about the American Indian's oral language heritage
- E. Implications of investigations into the linguistic environment of the Indian student for speech communication education
- F. Adult education in the community to reinforce school programs[2]

VII. Health Factors
- A. Relative incidence of speech and hearing disorders among Indian students
- B. Relationship of physical and mental health problems in the Indian community to school problems, as they concern oral language development

[2] Designated by the conferees as being of highest priority.

VIII. Testing and Evaluation

A. Development and validation of suitable diagnostic tests of speaking and listening behavior

B. Comparative studies of the feasibility of diagnostic testing based on oral and/or visual stimuli

C. Investigation of applicability of various existing diagnostic tests to speech communication of Indian students

D. Efficiency of speech education in an independent course setting versus speech improvement as a byproduct of the total curriculum

It is hoped that the results of this conference will have future significance for not only the American Indian but other culturally and lingually different groups in our society as well.[3]

[3] Transcripts of the major addresses presented and a complete listing of the conference participants are available upon request from the writer.

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